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Wine Tasting Rooms

As spring approaches and the tasting rooms start to fill up with visitors, we'd like to remind you of some of the regulations that are required of you. To ensure that counters and other surfaces remain sanitary, have a bucket of sanitizer available at all times (1 tsp. bleach per 1 gal. water).

For cleaning and sanitizing of dishes, make sure that your dishwasher is working properly by emitting sufficient sanitizer or using hot water to get the dish surface up to 160°F. Also, remember that all employees must have a current, Washington State food handler's card on file. Please call this department with any questions you have.

2003 In Review

A message from our food surveillance supervisor...

The year 2003 was a busy, successful one for this Department. With a total of 1003 licensed food service establishments in Benton and Franklin counties, 3453 inspections were conducted. Foodborne illness complaint investigations accounted for 56 of those and 225 were "other" type complaints. They ranged from the "critical" such as operator handling ready to eat foods with bare hands and undercooked meat to the "non-critical" such as soiled floors and tables in the dining room and a build up of garbage outside a building. These complaint numbers are down from 2002, 7% and 15% respectively. A total of 7607 food worker cards were issued in 2003 (30% more than last year). We completed the year with no confirmed foodborne illness outbreaks from public food service.

The top three critical violations cited were: 19% of inspections found hand sinks either inaccessible or not properly stocked for use. Eighteen percent of inspections found improper cold holding, either from leaving potentially hazardous foods out of refrigeration all together or from refrigeration units improperly functioning. Sixteen percent of inspections found hot holding violations, either from not heating the food to a high enough temperature before placing in the hot-holding equipment or from lack of preheating the unit, improper set temperature or a malfunctioning unit.

The top three non-critical violations were: 30% found soiled food contact surfaces, 26% found lack of food handler's cards by all employees, and 21% found lack of, or inappropriate use of, sanitizers.

If your establishment falls into the 80% or so that has the above items under control and are rarely, if ever, found with any of these violations, **BRAVO!** If you find your establishment cited inspection after inspection with the same violations, sit down with all employees and figure out why. Maybe one simple policy change could eliminate your food safety issue.

This Department works to ensure service of safe food to the public, just as you all do. I think we can both more easily accomplish this goal as partners. Next year, 2005, will bring many changes for both of us as the new WAC (Washington Administrative Code for Food Service) is implemented. Let's make 2004 the year to increase our partnerships so that our transition into 2005 will be smooth for all of us!

~Jean Ross, Food Surveillance Supervisor

Food Handler's Cards: Inventory Management Tips

One of the most frustrating times for managers during an inspection is when the inspector asks to see all of the food handler's cards. Here are some tips on how to make your food handler's cards a little less stressful during your next inspection

1. Do not store FHC's in personnel files. Store in one central location.
2. Have employees make a copy of their card so they can keep the original.
3. When an employee leaves, give back their card.
4. Do not store cards in a manager's office they may be locked on occasion.
5. Keep an accurate employee schedule and keep it near the FHC's.
6. Have an employee prepare FHC's when inspection starts, so that they can be ready by the end of the inspection when the inspector asks.
7. Schedule an on-site class to get your staff on track! Call the Health Department for details.

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Sewage Backups: Uncommon Knowledge on this Common Problem.

Recently there has been some confusion about what to do in the event of a sewage backup. The following is a real life example in order to help clarify future similar situations...

An inspector arrives for a routine inspection at a local restaurant, and notices a floor sink overflowing with water which had created a puddle extending a foot beyond the sink and onto the kitchen floor. The manager tried to correct it by plunging the sink. Unfortunately, the sink remained clogged and the plunger actually caused the water to splash out onto the high-traffic areas of the kitchen.

Was this a sewage backup?

Yes. Even though the standing water did not look black or even dingy, this water is considered sewage. In the above situation, the source of the water came from the overflowing floor sink which is directly connected to the sewer. The same bacteria found in sewer pipes (which can make people sick) could also be found in the water coming from the floor sink.

What causes a sewage backup?

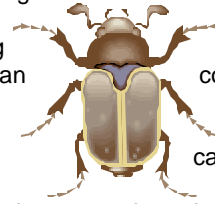
- A grease tank recently emptied
- A grease tank past its scheduled maintenance
- Older buildings with rusted iron pipes and sludge back up

Should an establishment close as a result of a sewage backup?

Yes. Be sure to call the Health District because not every situation is the same. Because this water can be very contaminated, the establishment should not be preparing or serving food until the backup has been repaired and all surfaces have been cleaned and sanitized.

Yikes! It's a Cockroach!

Nothing can damage a restaurant's reputation faster than a customer noticing a bug scurrying across the table or floor while they are eating. Often, that bug is the dreaded cockroach. The German cockroach is the most frequent offender in food service. Not only are they just plain creepy, but they carry many disease-causing organisms such as staph, strep, hepatitis virus, and coliform bacteria. They have even been implicated in the spread of typhoid, dysentery, and even suspected in the recent outbreak of SARS!



Prevention is the critical step in pest control. Pests need three things in order to survive: food, moisture, and shelter. Cockroaches can find food in many things: cereals, sugary substances, meat products, cheese, beer, leather, book bindings, magazines, cardboard boxes, money, and dead organic matter, so sanitation is essential. Cockroaches also need a place to live. The most common places where these pests live are:

1. Wall voids- so fill in any cracks or crevices in your establishment.
2. Electrical junction boxes and conduits.
3. Kitchen Equipment: prep tables, shelves, slicers, mixers, dish carts, and ovens make great roach harborage.
4. Dining room: there is usually an abundance of wood, shingles, booths, dividing walls, and chairs.

Pests can be a real problem in food service establishments. Often, professional pest control services are hired at great expense and the problem still remains. Some of the most common reasons are that not all active hiding places have been treated because cockroaches go to hard-to-reach areas. Here are some ways to control roaches:

1. Clean things up! Never leave food exposed. Garbage containers should be sealed, and emptied frequently.
2. Look for water and moisture sources, like dripping faucets, leaky pipes and sewer opening and fix them.
3. Get rid of hiding spaces. Boxes and other accumulated trash provide harborage and breeding areas.
4. Exclude cockroaches by using good screening, tight-fitting doors, and filling cracks and crevices.
5. Use appropriate pesticides, making sure that they are "food-service approved".

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